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Redevelopment Board Minutes 11/05/2007

Arlington Redevelopment Board
Minutes of November 5, 2007

Members Present: Christopher Loreti
Roland Chaput
Andrew West
Bruce Fitzsimmons

Also Present: Kevin J. O'Brien
Joey Glushko
Laura Wiener
David Berry

Andrew West called the meeting to order at 7:00 and recognized representatives from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), a consultant to the Planning Department, to speak about parking in Arlington.

Before they began, Andrew West asked to have them pause so the Board could meet Katie Kinnecom who had then arrived at the meeting and who has applied to be on the Symmes Neighborhood Advisory Committee. After a brief discussion, Roland Chaput moved that Katie Kinnecom be appointed to the Symmes Neighborhood Advisory Committee. Bruce Fitzsimmons seconded the motion and the Board voted 4 to 0 to approve. Roland Chaput then left the meeting to attend part of the Selectmen's meeting.

At 7:15 Andrew West asked the MAPC representatives to resume. Jenny Raitt introduced Mark Racicort and Jim Gallagher and asked Mark to begin the discussion. Mark Racicort began the discussion talking about overlay zoning districts explaining the pros and cons of using such a device and talked of how different parking standards could be implemented in an overlay district.

Jim Gallagher then spoke of his survey of parking in Arlington and of the parking standards in the Arlington Zoning Bylaw. The following observations were included.

A goal of the whole investigation was how to add people to the commercial districts (adding vibrancy) without adding traffic (discouraging vibrancy).

The usual highest demand for parking in commercial areas is on Saturday.

Arlington has relatively high parking requirements and high open space requirements.

Too much parking uses up land and generates traffic.

Sidewalk snow removal is important in maintaining pedestrian friendly business districts.

Arlington Center appears to have less parking than Lexington or Belmont centers.
Some communities allow shared parking – compatible uses arrange to use same spaces

Some communities have eliminated parking requirements in business districts

Arlington charges for parking far from stores (Russell Common) and parking is free close to stores (on street) – not logical.

Roland Chaput rejoined the meeting.

At 8:30 Andrew West recognized Joey Glushko to talk about possible changes in the signage regulations in the Zoning Bylaw. She presented several proposals that might improve our sign bylaw drawn from other communities and from our experience in administering the current bylaw. Comments included: limited neon signs might be allowed by special permit; we might place restrictions on sign lighting; the Board did not like the idea of directory signs on town property. The Board also considered modified zoning regulations in overlay districts. Staff was asked to continue to work on signage proposals.

The Board next discussed the leasing of the Parmenter and Crosby School buildings by reviewing a history of and projection of costs and revenues for the two buildings. The Board discussed the fact that depreciation shouldn't be applied to the buildings because the intent is to maintain the buildings. It may make sense to build up a capital fund, but there is no need to replace the building in 50 years. The Board also suggested that given the three year period during which the ARB has the buildings under its jurisdiction, we should not plan capital improvements unless they are absolutely needed or would be advantageous whether or not the buildings were retained after the three year period. Staff was asked to make the changes for review at the next ARB meeting.

The Board then reviewed minutes. Roland Chaput moved that the Board approve the minutes of the October 29, 2007 meeting. Chris Loreti seconded the motion and the Board voted 4 to 0 to approve.

The meeting adjourned at 10:30.

Respectfully submitted,
Kevin J. O'Brien